

(Continued from Fourth Page.)

tell us when we are getting close to his lair.

The nullah turned and twisted like a ram's horn, and after the first 10 rods we advanced on hands and knees. We had made a distance of half a mile when we got a faint sniff of the odor we had been expecting. Fifty feet farther it became so offensive that we were fain to hold our noses. Just here was a water hole 15 or 20 feet long and the width of the creek. The water was not deep; but we knew we could not pass through it without noise enough to arouse the tiger. There was a wall of rock beyond the pool, and we decided that our game was laid away there. We were characterized as idiots for doing what we did, but yet it seemed the proper thing to do under the circumstances. Each of us picked up a good sized stone and hurled it at the wall, and they had scarcely struck when the sleeping tiger sprang to his feet with a savage growl. While he was not above 10 yards away we could make him out but dimly. He was turning round and round and sniffing the air when we fired together, and he dropped dead. When we lighted torches and advanced, we found him to be an old male with teeth worn down to the gums and probably blind of one eye. He had committed havoc, however, and had we only wounded him he would have charged us, and we might have been numbered among his victims. We certainly expected to find the casket where we found the tiger, and great was our chagrin when we failed to find any trace of it. The body of the native seized that morning had been about half eaten, and the remains lay beyond the lair. While some of the human bones had doubtless been carried off by the hyenas and jackals during the tiger's excursions in search of prey there were enough lying about to make us believe he must have feasted on at least a dozen human beings. We found quite a number of trinkets belonging to the unfortunate, but we searched in vain for the casket. But for the fact of finding two or three relics which were identified as belonging to the robber we should have concluded that his wife told the story to give him a chance to escape pursuit.

"While you have failed to find it to-day I am sure you will find it to-morrow," said the old man when we returned to the village tired and discouraged. "The chain attached to the casket was not a strong one. The tiger dragged and carried the man over a very rough route fully half a mile. The chain might have been broken at any step. The casket may even be in one of the water holes. Now that you no longer have the tiger to look out for, you can make a more thorough search."

Next day we returned to the nullah with torch bearers, and beginning at the highway we searched every inch of ground and every water hole to the den and beyond. We found more trinkets and a number of coins, but the casket was not there to be discovered. After we had thoroughly satisfied ourselves of this fact, we decided that the woman had deceived us. Her husband had certainly been carried off and devoured by the tiger, but she was probably carrying the casket—and fled with it. Knowing that she could prove her story she had secreted the casket before entering the village and would bide her time to get away with it. When we informed the old man of our conclusion, he agreed with us. By his order the woman was about to be tortured to extort a confession when Captain Horton asked leave to question her again.

"I have told you the truth, sahib," she said when brought before us. "I did not know that my husband meditated stealing the casket. It was two o'clock in the morning when he aroused me from sleep and commanded me to go with him. We were out of the village before he told me what he had done. He would not permit me to take the casket in my hands. He did not tell me what it contained, but talked of rupees. I tried to get him to return to the village, but he threatened my life."

"How did the tiger attack?" asked the captain.

"We were running. I was on my husband's left. I think the tiger was crouched on the highway, as he seemed to spring from in front. When he bore my husband down, he shook him and mopped him about and paid no attention to me."

The woman's explanation gave us a new idea. As we were satisfied of the truth of her story she escaped punishment, and we promised the old man to renew the search on the morrow. As I have before mentioned, the woman could not locate the exact spot of attack. Those who had accompanied her that morning had found the tiger's tracks in the dust for some distance. In the morning we went straight to the crossing of the nullah and then worked back, carefully searching the rank grass and weeds on each side of the highway. At almost the first move we routed out and killed two poisonous serpents, but we persisted in the search. Thirty feet back from the nullah, in the midst of a tangle of vines, Captain Horton discovered the casket. The broken chain attached to it proved that we had worked on the right theory. The chain was broken and the casket flung aside while the tiger was worrying the man before carrying him off. Did the Hindoo divide with us as he agreed? He did, and to our entire satisfaction, but both of us agreed that he had been a robber instead of a prince, and that he was looted instead of heirlooms he shared with us.

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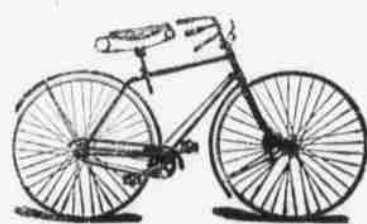
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